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ABSTRACT

For the first year in "what seems like eons," California's school districts will see an influx of new money, a large portion of it earmarked for developing competency in reading for students in kindergarten through grade 3. The expanded funding for reading results from a consensus among policy makers that the achievement of early literacy should be a primary focus of district reform. Funding for reading improvement will come from two sources, federal Goals 2000 monies and state General Funds. In total, $200 million is available specifically for reading. The following constitute the major funded literacy activities: professional reading development for all K-3 teachers in research-based reading instruction; preservice training of teacher candidates in research-based reading instruction; full sets of core reading instruction materials for every K-3 student; and comprehensive reading leadership training. (RS)

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by Terry Emmett

November 1, 1996

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For the first year in what seems like eons, California's school districts will see an influx of new money, a large portion of it earmarked for developing competency in reading for students in kindergarten through grade three. The expanded funding for reading results from a consensus among policy makers that the achievement of early literacy should be a primary focus of district reform.

Every Child a Reader, the report of the Superintendent's Task Force on Reading (see endnote 1) and the new Reading Program Advisory, Teaching Reading, (see endnote 2) lay out a rationale and a research basis for a recommended approach to the teaching of early reading. This new approach emphasizes a comprehensive approach to reading that includes:

* a strong literature, language, and comprehension program that includes a balance of oral and written language;
* an organized, explicit skills program that includes phonemic awareness (sounds in words), phonics, and decoding skills to address the needs

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of the emergent reader;

* ongoing diagnosis that informs teaching and assessment that ensures accountability; and
* a powerful early intervention program that provides individual tutoring for children at risk of reading failure (see endnote 3).

Funding for reading improvement will come from two sources, federal Goals 2000 monies and state General Funds. In total, $200 million is available for reading specifically, with additional funding for class size reduction and block grants for both districts and schools.

The following constitute the major funded literacy activities:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL K-3 TEACHERS IN RESEARCH-BASED READING INSTRUCTION

Thirteen million dollars from the General Fund (approximately $7 per K-3 student), along with $26.4 million of Goals 2000: Educate America Act funds (approximately $14 dollars per K-3 student), will provide professional development for practicing K-3 teachers in the elements of a comprehensive, research-based reading program.

In order to receive the AB 3482 (1996) General Fund allocation, recipient school districts must guarantee that they will, following delivery of

inservice training, certify that not less than 90 percent of K-3 teachers within the district have received such training and that the "provision of that inservice training did not cause a reduction in pupil instruction time." Additionally, the legislation establishes the required contents for a school district training program, should the school district or county office of education decide to apply for General Funds. Professional development provided with General Fund dollars is required to be coordinated and integrated with that provided with Goals 2000 funds.

The $26.4 million in Goals 2000 funding is being distributed via a regional competitive grant application process. The final date for submitting applications was September 15, 1996. The State Board of Education has approved grants to approximately 850 school districts and county offices of education. They will be receiving funding in November.

Notification of eligibility for AB 3482 Teacher Reading Instruction Development Program funds was mailed to eligible county and district superintendents in September. Funds will be distributed as apportionments, based on enrollment in grades K-3, following receipt of a signed agreement of compliance with the legislation. Compliance agreements were due October 10, 1996. It is expected that funding will occur in December.

PRESERVICE TRAINING OF TEACHER CANDIDATES IN RESEARCH-BASED READING INSTRUCTION

Six million dollars provided through the Goals 2000: Educate America Act will be used to fund partnerships between school districts, county offices of education, or consortia of counties or districts and institutions of higher education that prepare teachers. The purpose of the partnerships is threefold: to improve the preservice preparation of K-3 teachers in the area of reading instruction; to improve the preservice induction connection and support for beginning teachers, and to ensure a supply of well prepared teachers to the districts, particularly to districts that have difficulty in attracting adequately prepared teachers. Competitive grants will be available in each region of the state and the application process is being conducted regionally.

FULL SET OF CORE READING INSTRUCTION MATERIALS FOR EVERY STUDENT, K-3

AB 3482 appropriates $152 million, or approximately $80 per K-3 student, with the intent of ensuring that each pupil in grades kindergarten through three has a complete set of core reading materials. Funds will be distributed as an apportionment based on enrollment in K-3 as determined by

the 1996 California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) count. Potential applicants will be notified of the application process as soon as the adoption is completed.

The bulk of the funding is to be used for core reading instructional materials that meet the following requirements: (1) the instructional materials have been adopted by the state board in 1996, (2) they meet the requirements of AB 170 and AB 1504 (systematic explicit phonics and spelling) and (3) the materials "include, but are not necessarily limited to, phonemic awareness, systematic explicit phonics, and spelling patterns, accompanied by reading material that provides practice in the lesson being taught." Up to 5 percent of the amount may be used to acquire independent reading books for pupils enrolled in grades 1 to 4, for the purpose of stocking school or classroom libraries. A waiver process is provided to allow districts to select materials that have not been adopted if they otherwise meet the requirements of the legislation.

Following purchase of the materials, the governing board must certify to the California Department of Education that the funds have been used in accordance with the legislation. In addition, each governing board must certify at a public hearing of the board that all K-3 students have received a complete set of core reading materials that meet the requirements of the law.

COMPREHENSIVE READING LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Assembly Bill 3482 addresses the need to have strong leadership at the local levels for the purpose of improving reading instruction in grades K-3 in our public schools. The intent of the bill is to encourage members of governing boards of school districts, school administrators, and teachers identified by the governing board of the school district as having demonstrated leadership in reading instruction to implement a comprehensive reading program for kindergarten and grades 1 through 3.

The bill appropriates $2 million for the Comprehensive Reading Leadership Program under two parts: (1) one award for the development of a training program and materials; and (2) multiple awards to county offices or school districts for the delivery of the training program throughout the state.

The first award, to a single county office of education, has already been approved by the State Board of Education and will go to the Sacramento County Office of Education for the purpose of developing training and materials for the Comprehensive Reading Leadership Program. This work must be undertaken immediately. The second series of awards for the delivery of training will be announced later this year.

Endnotes

1. Every Child a Reader: The Report of the California Reading Task Force. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1995.
2. Teaching Reading: A Balanced, Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Reading in Prekindergarten Through Grade Three. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1996.
3. Teaching Reading, p. 3.

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